CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1) A device for maintaining an upper airway passage comprising:

a) A soft tissue retractor member;

b) A shaft connected at a first end to said retractor member; and

c) An anchor member connected to said shaft at a second end,

wherein said retractor member, said shaft and said anchor member comprise biocompatible materials.

2) The device of claim 1 in which said retractor member comprises an inflatable balloon.

3) The device of claim 1 in which said anchor member comprises an inflatable balloon.

4) The device of claim 2 in which said anchor member comprises an inflatable balloon.

5) The device of claim 2 further comprising a conduit for adding a fluid.

6) The device of claim 5 in which said fluid comprises a gaseous material.

7) The device of claim 5 in which said fluid comprises a liquid.

8) The device of claim 5 further comprising a regulator for said fluid.

9) The device of claim 1 in which said shaft is at least on of bendable and reversibly extendable.

10) The device of claim 9 in which one of the group consisting of said retractor member, said shaft, and said anchor member extends while maintaining a sufficient force to maintain an open upper airway.

11) The device of claim 1 in which said connection between said retractor member and said shaft is disengagable.

12) The device of claim 1 in which said connection between said anchor member and said shaft is disengagable.

13) The device of claim 1 in which said shaft comprises an internal passageway.

14) A method of maintaining an open passageway in the upper airway of a patient comprising:

a) Placing a retractor member against the base of said patients tongue;

b) Connecting said retractor member to a trans-tongue shaft; and

c) Connecting said trans-tongue shaft to an anchor removed from said retractor member.

15) The method of claim 14 in which said anchor is in the frenulum region of said patient.

16) The method of claim 14 in which said anchor is in communication with a muscle of said patient that is active during sleep.

17) The method of claim 14 in which said anchor is connected to at least one of said patient's teeth, a dental device, and a mount exterior to said patient's mouth.

18) The device of claim 1 further comprising a connection to at least one of the patient's pharynx, oral cavity, teeth, and a mount exterior to the mouth.

19) A device for communication with at least one of the gastrointestinal tract and the respiratory system of a patient in need of said communication comprising:

a) A trans-tongue member having an aperture; and

b) A tube passing through said trans-tongue member adapted for communication between the exterior of said patient and a portion of at least one of said patient's gastrointestinal tract and respiratory system.

20) A device for monitoring the health of a patient comprising:

a) A trans-tongue member; and

b) A sensor coupled to said trans-tongue member.

21) The device of claim 20 in which said sensor comprises at least one of a mechanical transducer and a chemical detector.

22) The device of claim 20 in which said sensor measures at least one of a condition in a portion of the tissue near said sensor and a condition in a portion of the circulatory system.

23) The device of claim 20 in which said device further comprises an electrode adapted to provide an electrical stimulus.

24) The device of claim 20 further comprising at least one member of the group consisting of a transmitter and a receiver.

25) A device for providing an electrical stimulus comprising:

a) A trans-tongue member; and

b) An electrode adapted to provide an electrical stimulus.

26) A device for delivering a drug to a patient in need of said drug comprising:

a) An implantable member having an aperture; and

b) A drug reservoir connected to said implantable member and adapted to gradually release said drug.

27) The device of claim 26 in which said implantable member comprises a bio-absorbable material.

28) The device of claim 19 in which said communication comprises fluid transport.

29) The device of claim 19 in which said communication comprises an imaging device.

30) The device of claim 29 in which said imaging device comprises a fiber optic.

31) The device of claim 19 comprising an endoscopic surgical member.